

REVIEWS OF RECENT BOOKS.

Guyer, Michael F., Ph.D. *Being Well Born.* Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company; \$1.00 net; 1916; pp. 374.

THIS volume deals in a comprehensive manner with the study of heredity and the methods whereby such knowledge as has been acquired in this field may be applied to the improvement of the human race. Starting from a brief treatment of the elementary biology of the cell, the author proceeds to a consideration of its behaviour in connection with the reproductive processes, and thence through Mendelism in general to Mendelism in man. Then follows a discussion of problems which are sometimes—though not on this occasion—grouped under the heading “Inheritance of acquired characters,” after which pre-natal influences, including parental alcoholism and venereal disease, receive a commonsense treatment. A chapter headed “Responsibility for Conduct” is introduced next, which leads up to the discussions on mental and nervous defects, crime, and delinquency. The volume concludes with an eminently sane consideration of “Race Betterment,” or the practical side of eugenics.

It will be seen from the foregoing account that a wide field has been covered, and it may perhaps be considered that the author has attempted to include almost too much in his endeavour to avoid taking anything for granted. Thus, the chapter on “Responsibility for Conduct” contains not only a general account of the neuron theory, with necessary references to the microscopical anatomy of the nervous system, but also touches on the evolution of conduct from the simple reactions of the lower forms of life. A biologist can sympathise with the author's evident affection for the biological methods of approaching such questions, but may wonder whether, in this case, a reader fresh to the subject would not rather be confused than safely guided by the congested mass of technical terms, which stand beside and across his path like signposts written in an unknown character and pointing to unknown places.

As a further indication of the nature of the work, it may be said that the author appears in it to be impartial and receptive rather than critical or original. He happily avoids controversy and causes the lion and the lamb to lie down together in the same chapter. The printing and get-up are excellent, and the book may be recommended as a good, though rather an exacting introduction to the subject.

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Davenport, Charles B., Ph.D. *The Hereditary Factor in Pellagra.* And **Muncey, Elizabeth B., M.D.** *A Study of Pellagra in Spartanburg County, S. Carolina.* Bulletin No. 16; “Eugenics Record” Office; Cold Spring Harbour; 15 cents; 1916; pp. 75.

THE two papers included in the pamphlet under review consist of a collection of pedigrees of pellagrous families compiled and summarised by Dr. Muncey, and a discussion of the data so obtained, in conjunction with other material, by Professor Davenport. The following are extracts from his conclusions: “The cause of the disease depends on certain constitutional inheritable traits of the affected individual.” “Many families never show mental symptoms, while others usually do; in some families the intestinal symptoms are slight or negligible, in others severe and associated with early death; in some families the skin eruptions amount to little, other families are characterised by severe ulceration and desquamation of the derma.” “When both parents are susceptible to the disease at least 40 per cent. of their children are susceptible.”

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